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UP IN ARMS

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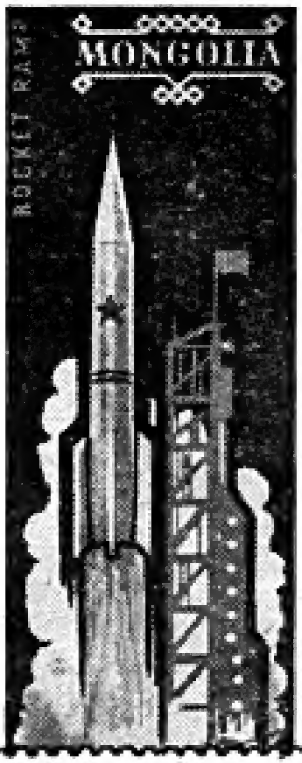

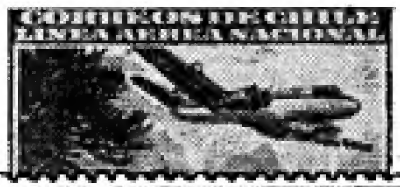

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UP IN ARMS

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Chapter 1. Common Bond

HUGHIE STARTED LIFE IN A GLASGOW TENEMENT. HE KNEW POVERTY, HUNGER, UNEMPLOYMENT. AT TWENTY-ONE, HE WAS A STOCKY, TEAK-TOUGH TROUBLE-MAKER.

HE WAS A HARD CASE AND PROUD OF IT.

IT TOOK THREE BATTERED AND BLEEDING CONSTABLES TO HAUL LYNCH TO THE SQUAD CAR.
LYNCH, YOU ARE A MENACE TO SOCIETY. THIS TIME I'M GOING TO FINE YOU...BUT IF YOU APPEAR HERE AGAIN YOU'LL GO TO PRISON!
JUST FOR SKELPIN' A COPPER! THAT YOUR IDEA OF JUSTICE?

LYNCH WAS A TEARAWAY, A SWORN ENEMY OF AUTHORITY, BUT...BESIDES HIS COURAGE ...HE HAD A CERTAIN TWISTED HONESTY.
IT'S A SNIP, HUGHIE. THERE'S ONLY AN AULD WATCHMAN THERE AT NIGHTS. THE PLACE IS STUFFED WI' CIGARETTES.
OCH AYE? SO WE BEAT UP AN AULD MAN FOR A FEW SMOKES! NOT FOR ME, PAL!

THEN, ONE NIGHT, AN OVER-ZEALOUS C.I.D. MAN WAS FOUND IN AN ALLEY AFTER A SAVAGE ATTACK. LYNCH CAME UNDER SUSPICION.
WHO DID IT, STEWART? JUST SAY AND WE'LL DO THE REST. WAS IT LYNCH?
I DINNA KEN. HE CAME AT ME IN THE DARK.
J33
J31
J31

WORD WENT BACK TO FATHER NOLAN, THE ONLY MAN WHO HAD EVER PENETRATED THE WALL OF SUSPICION LYNCH HAD BUILT ABOUT HIMSELF.
YE KNOW WHY I SENT FOR YE, HUGHIE. DID YE...OR DID YE NO!..GIVE THAT LONG-NOSED POLICEMAN THE FATHER AND MOTHER OF A HIDING TONIGHT?
NO, FATHER. I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT IT!

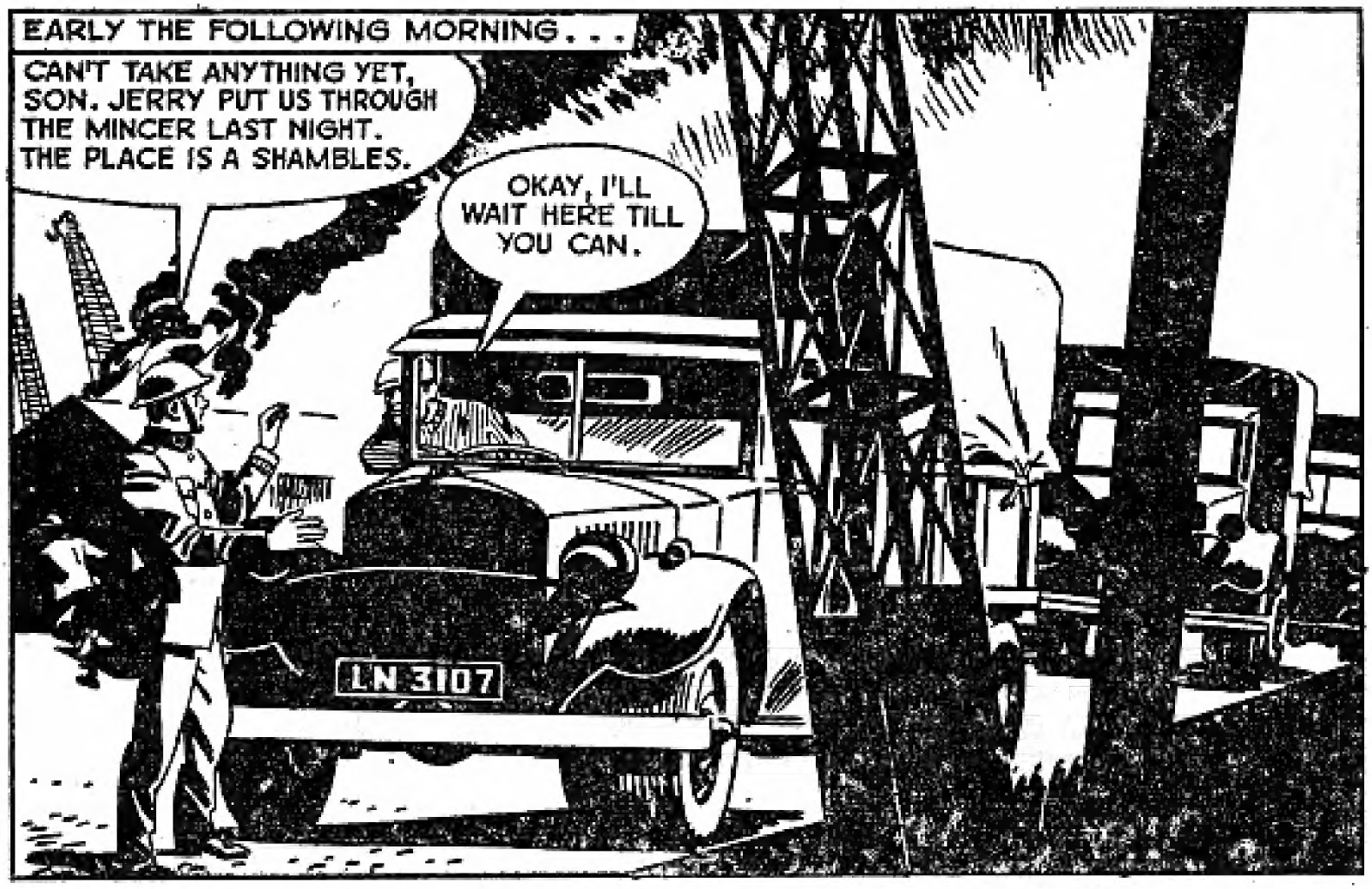
LYNCH ALWAYS LISTENED TO FATHER NOLAN.
D'YE EXPECT THE POLICE TO BELIEVE THAT, MY BOY! TAKE MY ADVICE AND MOVE SOUTH INTO ENGLAND TILL IT BLOWS OVER. I'LL SEND FOR YE WHEN THE TIME'S RIGHT. HERE'S A POUND TO HELP YE ON THE ROAD.

SO HUGHIE LYNCH SET OUT TO HITCH-HIKE TO ENGLAND. ALL HE HAD WAS FATHER NOLAN'S POUND, THE CLOTHES HE WORE... AND THE FLASH-POINT TEMPER OF A CLYDESIDE FIGHTING MAN.

THE SCENE CHANGES TO FRODINGHAM IN THE INDUSTRIAL HEART OF ENGLAND. JOHN FAIRFAX WAS OPERATING A SMALL TRANSPORT BUSINESS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EDDIE CARSON. FAIRFAX WAS YOUNG, DRIVEN ON BY AMBITION.

FAIRFAX WAS PUNISHING HIS BODY WITH OVERWORK. BUT HE HAD A DREAM OF A FLEET OF TRUCKS... AND WHAT IS YOUTH WITHOUT A DREAM?

IT WAS IN THE WINTER OF 1941. THE GERMAN BLITZES WERE BUILDING UP IN FEROCITY AND LONDON'S DOCKLAND WAS A JUICY TARGET.


EARLY THE FOLLOWING MORNING...
CAN'T TAKE ANYTHING YET, SON. JERRY PUT US THROUGH THE MINCER LAST NIGHT. THE PLACE IS A SHAMBLES.
OKAY, I'LL WAIT HERE TILL YOU CAN.
LN 3107

DEAD-TIRED, FAIRFAX GOT BACK TO FRODINGHAM IN THE LATE AFTERNOON.
EDDIE WENT OUT TO SEE SOMEONE. BY THE WAY, THERE'S A CHEQUE BEEN RETURNED BY THE BANK. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO COVER IT.
THAT'S A LOT OF BOLONEY! I GAVE EDDIE THREE HUNDRED QUID TO BANK LAST WEEK!

THEN CARSON CAME IN AND THE TRUTH WAS OUT!
LISTEN, JOHN! I GOT HOOKED UP WITH A GAMBLING SCHOOL. I HAD TO FIND THE MONEY OR . . . I PROMISE I'LL PAY IT BACK. . . EVERY PENNY.
GO HOME, JENNIE. I'VE GOT SOME BUSINESS TO DISCUSS WITH MISTER CARSON!

HE WAS ALONE WITH THE MAN WHO HAD BETRAYED HIS TRUST AND DESTROYED HIS DREAMS.
I'VE WORKED DAY AND NIGHT FLOGGING THAT WAGON UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY TO MAKE MONEY. NOW IT'S ALL GONE FOR NOTHING.
I'LL PAY IT ALL BACK, JOHN! I PROMISE!

JOHN'S HANDS CLOSED ON THE SCRAWNY THROAT, AND HE SHOOK THE OTHER FURIOUSLY.
YOU THIEVING LITTLE RAT! YOU'VE BEEN ROBBING ME ALL ALONG. NONE OF MY BILLS HAVE BEEN PAID. I OWE MONEY EVERYWHERE. YOU'VE RUINED ME!
JOHN! FOR PITY'S SAKE... DON'T! YOU'RE... KILLING ME!

THEN... MERCIFULLY... SANITY RETURNED. FAIRFAX HURLED THE EMBEZZLER AWAY FROM HIM.
GET OUT OF HERE! IF I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN, EDDIE... I'LL KILL YOU! GET OUT!

THAT NIGHT, FAIRFAX CONFIDED IN HIS FATHER.
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH IT, JOHNNY. PROSECUTE HIM!
WHAT'S THE USE, DAD? IT WOULDN'T HELP ME. I'M SKINNED. I'LL MAKE MY WAY DOWN TO LONDON. AND GET A JOB...OR ELSE ENLIST.

MEANWHILE, HUGHIE LYNCH HAD HITCH-HIKED TO THE NORTHERN FRINGES OF LONDON. NIGHT WAS CLOSING IN AS HE CLIMBED DOWN FROM THE LORRY.
THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO. YOU'LL FIND A GOOD CAFE FARTHER DOWN. SO LONG, JOCK.
THANKS FOR THE LIFT, PAL... BUT DON'T CALL ME JOCK. I DON'T LIKE IT!

AND SO TWO STRANDS IN THE TANGLED WEB OF FATE WERE GATHERED UP AND BROUGHT HUGHIE LYNCH AND JOHN FAIRFAX TOGETHER.
HAND ME THE SAUCE-BOTTLE, PAL.
IF YE WANT IT, COME AND GET IT. DO YE TAKE ME FOR A WAITER OR SOMETHING?

THE TRIGGER-TEMPERED CLYDESIDER AND THE TOUGH MIDLANDER EYED EACH OTHER FOR A LONG SECOND, BRISTLING LIKE STRANGE DOGS. THEN FAIRFAX GRINNED . . .
TAKE IT EASY, JOCK. YOU'RE IN CIVILISED PARTS NOW. ANYWAY, YOU'RE TOO SMALL TO BE AWKWARD!
IS THAT SO! I CAN HANDLE YOUR KIND ANYTIME, YE LONG-JAWED ENGLISH WINDBAG!
YOU BOW-LEGGED, RED-HAIRED, LITTLE SCOTCH APE! FOR TWO PINS, I'D THROW YOU OUT!
SO IT'S A FIGHT YE'RE AFTER, OKAY, MON, TRY THIS ONE FOR SIZE!

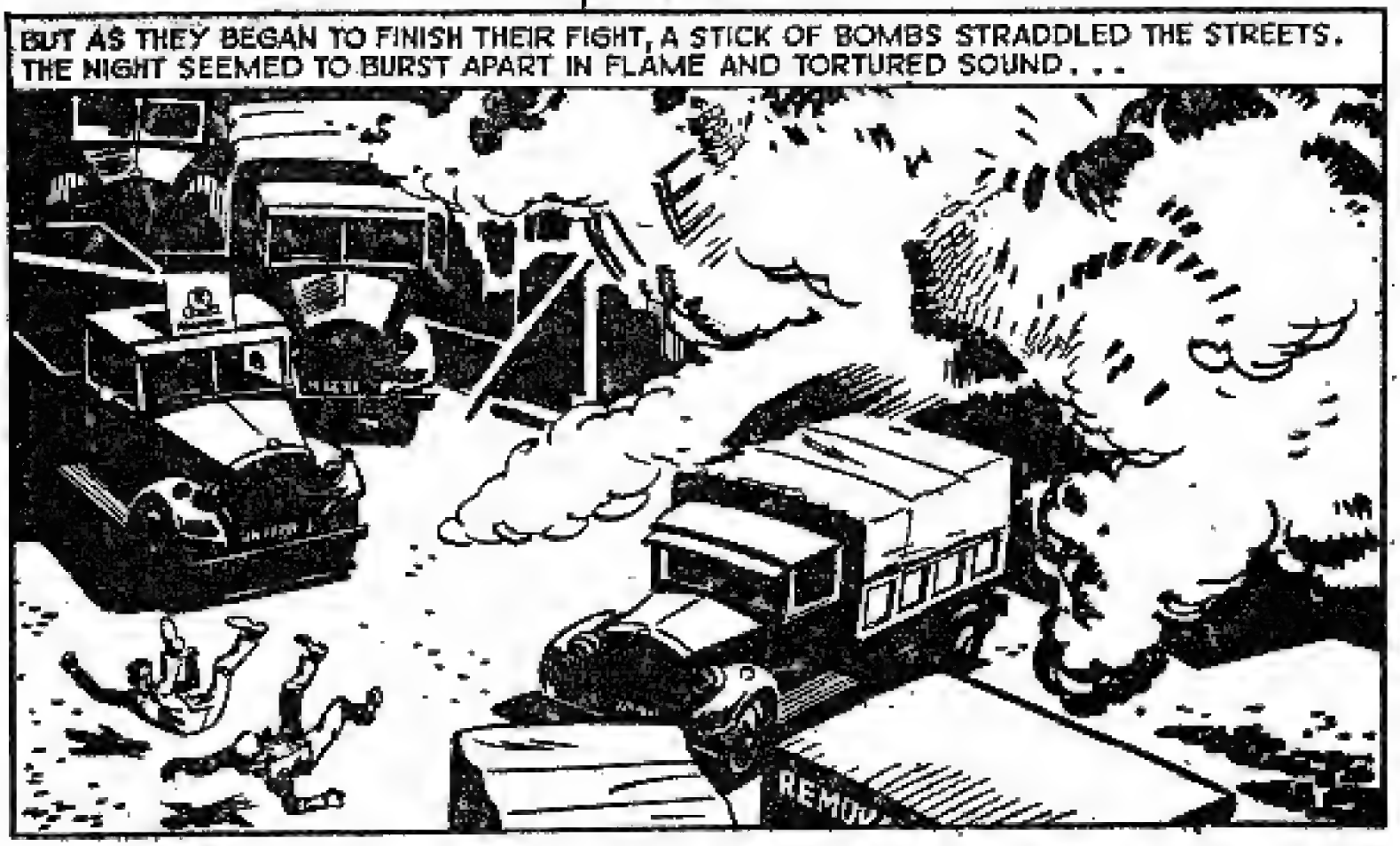
LYNCH WAS A NATURAL FIGHTER. FAIRFAX HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF A SCORE OF BRAWLS IN THE ROAD TRANSPORT JUNGLE WHERE MEN OFTEN FOUGHT EACH OTHER FOR HAULAGE JOBS.
THEY'LL WRECK THE PLACE! QUICK...CALL THE POLICE, FRED!

OUTSIDE, THE NIGHTMARE WAIL OF SIRENS ANNOUNCED THE BEGINNING OF ANOTHER LONG NIGHT OF HAVOC AND TERROR.
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN FOR ANOTHER BASHING, SID. WONDER WHAT THEY'RE AFTER THIS TIME?
I WOULDN'T KNOW, BERT. I'VE GOT A CALL FROM ERNIE'S CAFE. TWO ROUGHNECKS JUST STARTED A FIGHT. GIVE US A HAND, WILL YOU?

FOR THE FIRST TIME, LYNCH HAD MET A MAN WHO COULD STAND UP TO HIS HAMMER-FISTS AND HIT BACK WITH CLUBBING, HURTING PUNCHES.
SOMEBODY OUGHT TO STOP 'EM!
YOU TRY IT, MATE. I WOULDN'T GET MIXED UP WITH THAT LOT FOR A PENSION!

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE BATTLE, THE POLICE WALKED IN.
LOOK OUT! THE COPS! GET OUT THE BACK WAY! FOLLOW ME!
WHAT ABOUT IT; JOCK? I'VE NO MONEY TO PAY FINES.
OKAY, BUT DON'T CALL ME JOCK! YOU ENGLISH GOMMERIL!

AS THEY CAME OUT ON TO THE VEHICLE PARK BEHIND THE CAFE...
AH WEEL, WE'LL FINISH IT OFF OUT HERE.
JUST AS YOU LIKE, PAL. I'LL SAY THIS... YOU SCOTTIES DON'T KNOW WHEN YOU'RE LICKED!


BUT AS THEY BEGAN TO FINISH THEIR FIGHT, A STICK OF BOMBS STRADDLED THE STREETS. THE NIGHT SEEMED TO BURST APART IN FLAME AND TORTURED SOUND...

IN THE DEATHLY SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED, FAIRFAX CLIMBED TO HIS FEET AND LOOKED ROUND. HIS BRUISED FACE TAUTENED WITH SHOCK AND HORROR.
TAKE A LOOK AT THE CAFE, JOCK! A DIRECT HIT! THEY'VE WIPED IT OUT!
AYE, THE DIRTY MURDERERS!

A TEMPORARY TRUCE WAS DECLARED WHILE THE TWO MEN TURNED TO HELP THE AMBULANCE AND FIRE SQUADS IN THE GRIM BUSINESS OF RESCUE WORK.
LOOK AT YON! FAIR SICKENS YE! THE ROTTEN JERRY SCUM! I'D LIKE TO GET MA HANDS ON 'EM.
THEN WHY DON'T YOU, JOCK? IT'S UP TO YOU.

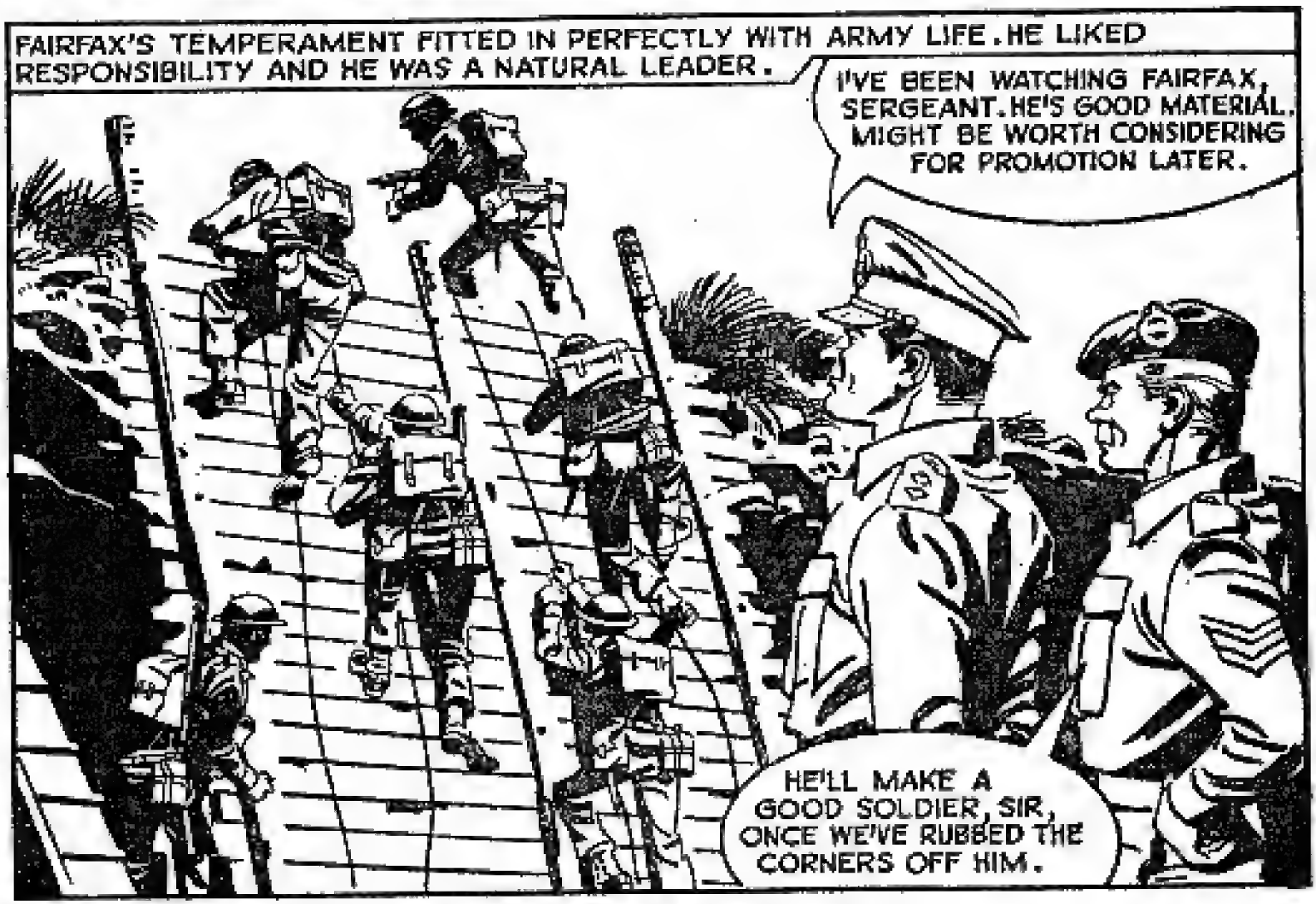
SOMETHING IN THE QUIET VOICE AND STEEL-STEADY EYES SILENCED LYNCH'S INSTINCTIVE REACTION OF ANGER AND SUSPICION.
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT, SOLDIER?
THIS IS YOUR FIGHT, CHUM. THE ONLY WAY WE CAN STOP THESE RATS IS TO HIT BACK WITH ALL WE'VE GOT. YOU CAN DO THAT BEST IN THE ARMY.

FAIRFAX'S IMAGINATION LEAPED UP TO MEET THE SOLDIER'S CHALLENGE.
HE'S RIGHT, JOCK. WE ALL BELONG IN THIS. I'M JOINING UP TOMORROW. HOW ABOUT YOU?
NOBODY TELLS ME WHAT TO DO, PAL! I GO MA OWN WAY!

LYNCH'S FIERY TEMPER SPARKED FAIRFAX TO SWIFT ANGER.
YOU BET YOU DO, JOCK! IF THE ARMY TOOK YOU, YOU'D PROBABLY SPEND HALF YOUR TIME IN THE GLASSHOUSE ANYWAY!
IS THAT SO? I'D MAKE A BETTER SOJER THAN YOU EVEN THEN! COME ON, WE'LL PROVE IT! GET YOUR FISTS UP!

AS FAIRFAX TURNED ON HIS TORMENTOR, A STICK OF BOMBS STRUCK IN HAMMERBLOWS OF SOUND AND DESTRUCTION. WHEN THE SMOKE HAD CLEARED. . .
LOOKS LIKE YOUR MATE CLEARED OFF. HE'S A TOUGH ONE, THAT!
HE'S NO MATE OF MINE, SOLDIER. JUST A CROSS-GRAINED LITTLE SCOTTIE THAT'S NO GOOD TO MAN NOR BEAST!

AND SO THE VAST WAR-MACHINE TOOK IN FAIRFAX AND STARTED TO MOULD HIM INTO A TOUGH, DISCIPLINED FIGHTING-MAN.
LOOK AT YOU! YOU FLABBY, COLLECTION OF 'ORRIBLE EXAMPLES! WELL I'M GOING TO MAKE MEN OF YOU IF IT KILLS YOU!


FAIRFAX'S TEMPERAMENT FITTED IN PERFECTLY WITH ARMY LIFE. HE LIKED RESPONSIBILITY AND HE WAS A NATURAL LEADER.
I'VE BEEN WATCHING FAIRFAX, SERGEANT. HE'S GOOD MATERIAL. MIGHT BE WORTH CONSIDERING FOR PROMOTION LATER.
HE'LL MAKE A GOOD SOLDIER, SIR, ONCE WE'VE RUBBED THE CORNERS OFF HIM.

AND SO, IN THE FULNESS OF TIME, LANCE-CORPORAL FAIRFAX COMPLETED HIS TRAINING AND WAS POSTED TO A CRACK INFANTRY UNIT. A FEW WEEKS LATER...
OPEN UP, SERGEANT, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? YOU CAN SPILL IT NOW, SURELY.
OKAY, WE'RE EMBARKING AT PLYMOUTH FOR NORTH AFRICA. A NEW CHAP'S TAKEN OVER THERE...I THINK THEY CALL HIM MONTGOMERY. HE'LL NEED TO BE GOOD TO OUTSMART ROMMEL!
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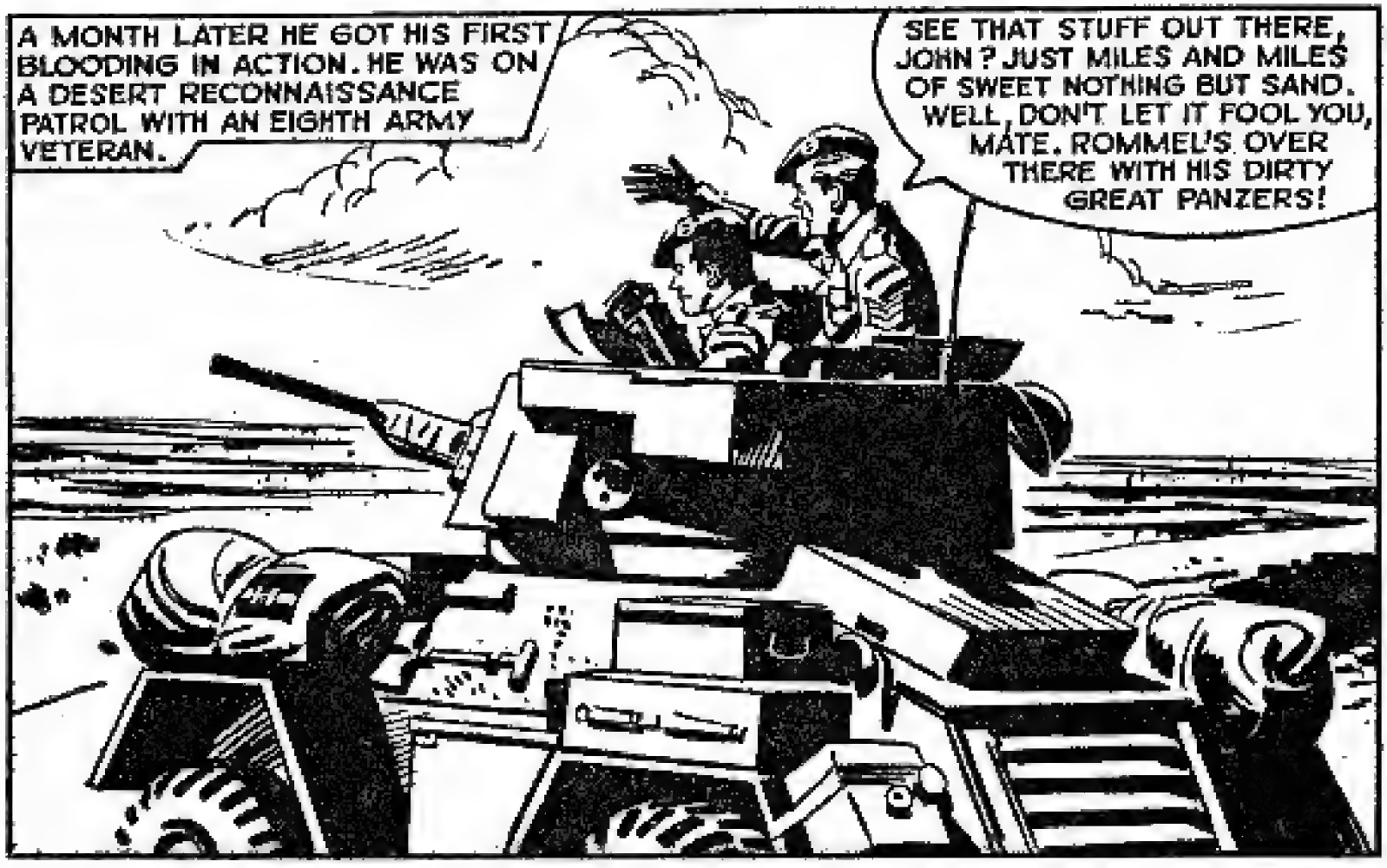
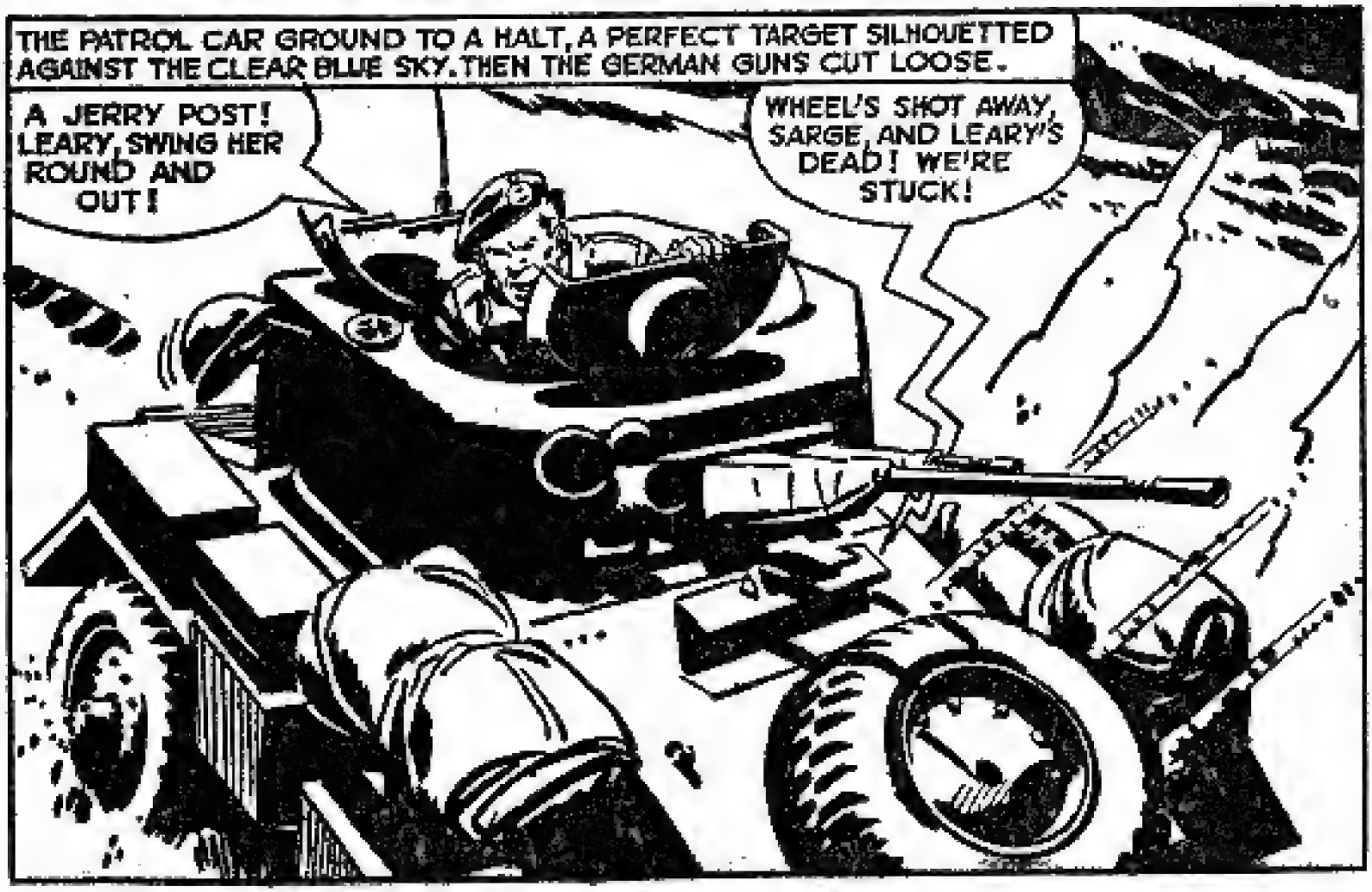

A MONTH LATER HE GOT HIS FIRST BLOODING IN ACTION. HE WAS ON A DESERT RECONNAISSANCE PATROL WITH AN EIGHTH ARMY VETERAN.
SEE THAT STUFF OUT THERE, JOHN? JUST MILES AND MILES OF SWEET NOTHING BUT SAND. WELL, DON'T LET IT FOOL YOU, MATE. ROMMEL'S OVER THERE WITH HIS DIRTY GREAT PANZERS!

AS THE RECCE CAR LURCHED AND SLITHERED DOWN THE SAND RIDGE, A GERMAN OUTPOST WATCHED IT.
A BRITISH ARMOURED CAR! WE ARE IN LUCK. IT'S COMING THIS WAY. HOLD YOUR FIRE, THEN AIM AT THE VENTS AND THE TYRES.


THE PATROL CAR GROUND TO A HALT, A PERFECT TARGET SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE CLEAR BLUE SKY. THEN THE GERMAN GUNS CUT LOOSE.
A JERRY POST! LEARY, SWING HER ROUND AND OUT!
WHEEL'S SHOT AWAY, SARGE, AND LEARY'S DEAD! WE'RE STUCK!

COOLLY, METHODICALLY, THE GERMAN MACHINE GUNNERS HOSED THE STRANDED CAR WITH THEIR HEAVY, ARMOUR-PIERCING BULLETS.
MCIB

ONE SLUG PENETRATED A HALF-SHUT VENT AND FOUND THE PETROL TANK. THERE WAS A WHOOSH OF FLAME!
BEHIND THE CAR... OR WE'RE DEAD DUCKS! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE!

THEY LAY THERE, PINNED DOWN BY A CREEPING, SEARCHING BARRAGE OF BULLETS.
THEY'RE DUG IN BEHIND THAT RIDGE. IF THEIR SHOTS BRING UP A JERRY PANZER . . . WE'RE FINISHED! THEY'LL JUST GRIND US INTO THE GROUND.
LOOK, SARGE ...OVER THERE!

THOSE GULLEYS... IF I COULD GET INTO ONE UNSEEN AND WORK MY WAY ROUND THEIR FLANK, I MIGHT GET NEAR ENOUGH TO RUSH 'EM.
THEY'LL PROBABLY CUT YOU TO PIECES BEFORE YOU GOT NEAR, FAIRFAX, BUT IT'S JUST CRAZY ENOUGH TO HAVE A CHANCE.

FAIRFAX EXPECTED THE KILLING IMPACT OF ENEMY BULLETS WITH EVERY YARD OF THE WAY.
I USED TO PLAY THIS STUFF IN THE CUB PACK ...BUT THEY DIDN'T USE MACHINE GUNS THEN! THIS TIME WE'RE PLAYING FOR KEEPS!

AT LAST, ONE OF THE GERMAN GUN-CREW SAW FAIRFAX...
DONNERWETTER! ACHTUNG! THERE'S ONE ...ON OUR RIGHT! GET THE GUN ON HIM. SCHNELL!

FAIRFAX HEARD THE WARNING, SAW THE VICIOUS STEEL SNOUT SWINGING ROUND ON HIM. HE GRITTED HIS TEETH AND BEGAN TO RUN.
ACH, TOMMY! YOU'RE A BRAVE MAN...OR A FOOL! CUT HIM DOWN, KURT!

THEN THE FORTUNE THAT SOMETIMES FAVOURS LOST CAUSES AND DESPERATE FIGHTING-MEN, SWUNG THE BALANCE ROUND TO FAIRFAX.
IT'S JAMMED! WE CAN'T...
YOU FOOLS! LEAVE HIM TO ME! I'LL... AAGH!

ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THE NAZI GUNNERS DIED AT THEIR SPANDAU.
SUDDENLY IT WAS OVER.
NICE WORK, KID! NOW YOU KNOW WHAT THIS WAR'S REALLY ABOUT. WE'LL FIND OUR WAY BACK TO CAMP BEFORE THESE BOYS' PLAYMATES COME OUT TO RELIEVE THEM. LET'S GO.
A ROVING RECONNAISSANCE UNIT PICKED THEM UP AND DROVE THEM BACK TO CAMP. AS THEY CAME OUT OF THE INTELLIGENCE TENT...
LOOKS LIKE A NEW DRAFT COMING IN. SEEMS THEY CAN'T WAIT TO GET INTO ACTION, TOO.
I THINK I KNOW ONE OF 'EM! IT'S THE LITTLE JOCK!

Chapter 2. Strange Reunion

Up In Arms

LYNCH HAD LOST NONE OF HIS GIFT FOR RAW ACID-STINGING INSULT.
SO YOU MADE IT, JOCK. WHAT CHANGED YOUR MIND?
THAT'S MY BUSINESS! YOU'LL BE THE BIG ENGLISH GOWK I CLOBBERED YON NIGHT IN THE AIR-RAID. I SEE YE'RE A LANCE-JACK NOW. HOW MANY DRINKS DID YE BUY YER SERGEANT FOR THAT!

IT WAS THE OLD, FAMILIAR LYNCH... PAYING RESPECT OR LOYALTY TO NO MAN.
SO YOU KNOW THAT LITTLE APE! HE'S BEEN A HANDFUL. I'VE PUT HIM ON SO MANY FIZZERS I'VE RUN OUT OF CHARGES! THAT COCKNEY'S NO BETTER!
THEY'LL SETTLE DOWN, I EXPECT.

IT WAS THE IRONY OF WAR THAT HAD BROUGHT THE THREE ODDLY-ASSORTED MEN TOGETHER... AND FINALLY LAUNCHED THEM TOGETHER IN BATTLE.
COR, THIS IS A TURN-UP. WHAT MADE MONTY GO FOR THIS NIGHT-FIGHTING STUFF? CAN'T HE SLEEP AT NIGHTS?
WHY DON'T YE RUN FOR IT, NOSHER? NOBODY'LL SEE YE.
SHUT UP, YOU TWO!

THEN FAIRFAX GOT A GLIMPSE OF THE FIGHTING QUALITIES OF THE SCOT AND THE COCKNEY. TWO MISFITS WITH ONE THING IN COMMON... A BLIND, RECKLESS COURAGE.
COME ON, YE ENGLISH LUGS! YE WANT TO LIVE FOREVER?
SAVE SOME FOR ME, ME LITTLE SCOTCH BANTAM!

WHEN THE GERMAN RESISTANCE IN NORTH AFRICA WAS BATTERED AND BEATEN INTO THE DESERT SAND, THE THREE KEPT TOGETHER... WELDED BY A STRANGE BOND OF SARDONIC CONTEMPT FOR EACH OTHER.
NOW WATCH IT, JOCK! WE'RE HAVING A DAY ON THE TOWN. NO MORE FIGHTS LIKE LAST TIME OR YOU'LL BE ON JANKERS AGAIN.
ARE YE GETTING WINDY OR SOMETHING? DON'T LET THAT STRIPE GANG TO YER HEAD!

THE WILD AND THE LAWLESS . . . TWO CHILDREN OF THE GUTTERS.
FOR PETE'S SAKE! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT, NOSHER?
KNOCKED IT OFF A BARRER, MATE. TRY A SLICE. IT'S LOVELY!
SOME TIME LATER, THE NEWS CAME THROUGH TO FAIRFAX. HE WAS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO A NEWLY-FORMED PARATROOPER DIVISION FOR TRAINING.
WHAT'S THE IDEA, TOSH? YOU LOOKING FOR A CUSHY CRIB?
NO! I JUST WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM YOU TWO SCRUFFS!
PARATROOPS, EH? WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A BASH, JOCK? YOU'RE SO SMALL, YOU WON'T EVEN NEED A PARACHUTE. THEY COULD LET YOU DOWN WITH A HANDKERCHIEF!
YOU'RE ASKIN' FOR IT, YE BIG, BENT-NOSED COCKNEY LUG!

THERE WAS AN OMINOUS GLINT IN THE EYE OF THE FORMER LONDON BARROW-BOY THAT MADE FAIRFAX UNEASY.
I WOULDN'T MIND HAVING A BASH AT IT MESELF. IT COULD BE WANGLED.
LAY OFF, NOSHER! THEY WOULDN'T TAKE YOU TWO LAYABOUTS!
IS THAT SO, PAL? MAYBE YE'D LIKE TO BET ON IT!

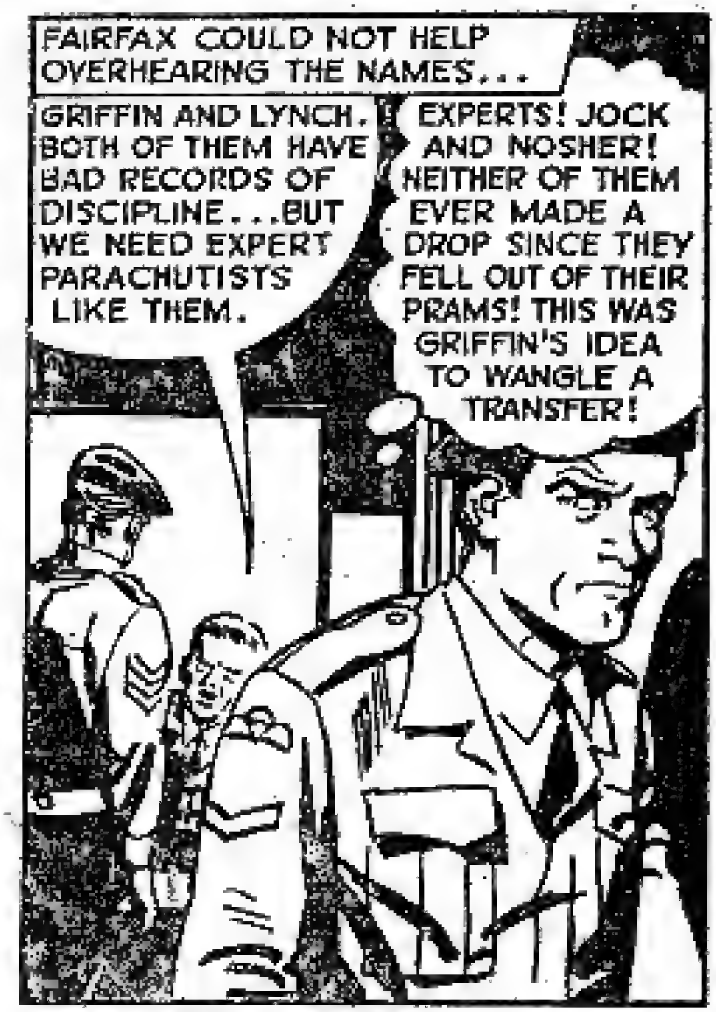
A WEEK LATER FAIRFAX LEFT TO JOIN HIS NEW UNIT.
SO LONG! BE SEEING YOU . . . SOMETIME.
I SHOULDN'T BE AT ALL SURPRISED, JOHNNY. IT'S A SMALL WORLD.

BACK IN ENGLAND, FAIRFAX WENT INTO TRAINING WITH THE NEWLY-FORMED PARATROOP DIVISION. A SCHOOL OF BATTLE-HARDENED MEN LEARNING THE NEW TECHNIQUES OF AIR ASSAULT WHICH THE NAZIS HAD PIONEERED.
THIS IS YOUR FIRST REAL DROP, SON. REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED. . . FALL LIKE A SHOT RABBIT WHEN YOU HIT THE GROUND AND GET THOSE SHROUD-LINES UNDER CONTROL. OKAY, GET GOING!

FEROCIOUS TRAINING SCHEDULES DESIGNED TO TEST A MAN UNDER STRESS, TO PROBE HIS WEAKNESSES AND HIS HIDDEN RESERVES OF COURAGE.

THERE WERE INEVITABLE FAILURES. THERE HAD TO BE...SINCE MEN ARE ONLY FLESH AND BLOOD.
I CAN'T DO IT, SERGEANT! MAYBE I'M YELLOW...BUT I'D RATHER DIE THAN GO DOWN THROUGH THERE!
OKAY, LAD...YOU'RE NOT YELLOW! I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN BEFORE. TAKE OFF YOUR GEAR AND RELAX. THE C.O. WILL FIX YOU ANOTHER POSTING.

IN SIX WEEKS, FAIRFAX HAD PASSED THE INTENSIVE COURSE.
BY THE WAY, SERGEANT, WE'VE A NEW DRAFT ARRIVING TODAY. I SEE TWO OF THEM WERE EXPERIENCED DROPPERS BEFORE THE WAR...EXHIBITION STUFF. THEY SHOULD BE USEFUL.
I'LL SAY THEY WILL, SIR. WHO ARE THEY?


FAIRFAX COULD NOT HELP OVERHEARING THE NAMES...
GRIFFIN AND LYNCH. BOTH OF THEM HAVE BAD RECORDS OF DISCIPLINE...BUT WE NEED EXPERT PARACHUTISTS LIKE THEM.
EXPERTS! JOCK AND NOSHER! NEITHER OF THEM EVER MADE A DROP SINCE THEY FELL OUT OF THEIR PRAMS! THIS WAS GRIFFIN'S IDEA TO WANGLE A TRANSFER!

THE TWO BAD PENNIES HAD TURNED UP!
CALLING YOURSELVES EXPERT DROPPERS! YOU MUST BE CRAZY! WHEN THEY FIND OUT YOU WERE JUST SHOOTING A LINE...THEY'LL TEAR YOU APART!
TAKE IT EASY, PAL. THERE'S NOTHING TO THIS PARACHUTE GAME.
IF YOU CAN DO IT... SO CAN WE!
21

BUT THERE WAS WORSE TO COME!
GRIFFIN AND LYNCH...GET YOUR GEAR ON. YOU'RE SKIPPING PRELIM. TRAINING. I'LL TAKE YOU UP FOR A PRACTICE JUMP. MAKE IT SNAPPY!

SUDDENLY FAIRFAX DECIDED IT HAD GONE TOO FAR.
LISTEN, SARGE. I KNOW THOSE TWO MEN. THEY'RE A PAIR OF CRAZY CHANCERS! THEY'VE NEVER MADE A DROP BEFORE! YOU CAN'T LET THEM GO UP!
THEIR PAPERS SAY THEY'RE EXPERTS. I'VE GOT THE C.O.'S INSTRUCTIONS. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME, FAIRFAX. THEY'RE GOING UP! WE'LL SOON KNOW IF THEY'RE BLUFFING!

DRY-MOUTHED, FAIRFAX WATCHED THE DRONING TRANSPORT HIGH ABOVE HIM. TWO DOLL-LIKE FIGURES FELL FROM THE HATCH. ONE PARACHUTE BALLOONED OUT...BUT THE OTHER..!
HE ISN'T GOING TO MAKE IT!
PULL YOUR RING, MAN! PULL!

AT BARELY A HUNDRED FEET THE PARACHUTE MUSHROOMED OPEN AND LYNCH HIT THE GROUND IN A TANGLE OF SHROUDS.
YOU THICK-SKULLED SCREWBALL! YOU GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK! WHAT HAPPENED?
OCH, I FORGOT WHERE THE RING WAS. BUT IT'S GRAND UP THERE, MON. BETTER THAN GLASGOW FAIR!

THEN THE SERGEANT CAME UP FROM THE LANDED PLANE.
YOU PAIR OF HORRIBLE LITTLE LIARS! EXPERTS! YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 'CHUTE AND A BED-SHEET! I'D REPORT YOU TO THE C.O. . . . IF I DIDN'T ADMIRE YOUR SHEER GUTS! THAT'S ALL!

AND SO THE COURSE OF THE WAR SWEPT UP FAIRFAX, LYNCH AND GRIFFIN INTO ITS IRON GRIP. D-DAY WAS OVER AND THE ALLIED FORCES WERE RIPPING THROUGH THE NAZI DEFENCES IN FRANCE. BUT THERE WERE STILL FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES AHEAD. . .
THESE THREE BRIDGEHEADS AT EINDHOVEN, NIJMEGEN AND ARNHEM MUST BE TAKEN INTACT, TO ALLOW OUR ARMOUR AND MOTORISED COLUMNS ACCESS INTO HOLLAND.
SOUNDS LIKE AN AIRBORNE OPERATION, SIR.

THUS OPERATION "MARKET GARDEN" WAS BORN. ONE SEPTEMBER MORNING, IN THE QUIET KENTISH COUNTRYSIDE...
WE LAND EIGHT MILES WEST OF ARNHEM HERE. WILSON'S MOB WILL GO IN FIRST TO LAY DOWN NYLON COLOUR-STRIPS AND SMOKE FLOATS. THEN IT'S OUR SHOW.

ARNHEM WAS A TRAGEDY OF BROKEN-DOWN COMMUNICATIONS, OF POCKETS OF MEN FIGHTING FEROCIOUSLY AGAINST STEADILY-MOUNTING ENEMY OPPOSITION.
WHAT THE DEVIL'S HAPPENED TO OUR SUPPORT TROOPS? FOR PETE'S SAKE, FOSTER, CAN'T YOU GET THROUGH TO THEM?
NO GOOD, SARGE. PLENTY OF MUSH BUT NOTHING THAT MAKES SENSE.

FAIRFAX'S SECTION WAS TRAPPED IN A HOUSE BASEMENT, CAUGHT IN A CROSSFIRE FROM ENEMY GUNS.
THE WHOLE HOUSE IS ON FIRE. WE'VE GOT TO BREAK OUT OF HERE... OR BE SMOKED OUT LIKE RATS!
THERE'S A WAY OUT THE BACK. MIGHT BE WORTH TRYING.

BUT THE ENEMY HAD ANTICIPATED THEIR MOVE. AS THEY CAME OUT INTO THE DAYLIGHT, SMOKE-BLINDED AND CHOKING, A CORDON OF BLACK-CLAD S.S. MEN AWAITED THEM.
THROW DOWN YOUR GUNS, TOMMIES. YOU ARE FORTUNATE. WE DON'T USUALLY TAKE PRISONERS...BUT THIS TIME WE NEED INFORMATION.
BUT LYNCH, AS USUAL, REFUSED TO SURRENDER, WHATEVER THE ODDS AGAINST HIM.

THE SCOT'S ACCURATELY THROWN GRENADE EXPLODED AT THE FEET OF S.S. TROOPS AND FAIRFAX WAS QUICK TO SEIZE THE CHANCE IT OFFERED.
MOVE, BOYS . . . STRAIGHT AT 'EM!

THEY WERE FIGHTING AT CLOSE QUARTERS . . . GRIM, MURDEROUS COMBAT WITH NO MERCY GIVEN OR ASKED FOR.

THEN, MIRACULOUSLY, THEY WERE THROUGH ...POUNDING ALONG A NARROW ALLEYWAY OFF THE STREET.
HAWKINS AND SEDDON WERE KILLED IN THAT FIRST RUN... AND MY GUN'S EMPTY. WHAT DO WE DO NOW? SURROUND THE JERRY ARMY?
THERE MUST BE SOME OF OUR BOYS IN THE AREA.

FAIRFAX DREW BACK SHARPLY...THE COBBLED STREET AT THE END OF THE SHADOWY PASSAGE THUNDERED AND SHOOK TO THE CLANKING TRACKS OF HEAVY TANKS!
GET BACK! THEY'RE BRINGING UP THEIR TANKS!
TOO LATE, JOHNNY! WE'RE TRAPPED!

GRIFFIN WAS RIGHT. THE FOUR PARATROOPERS WERE CAUGHT IN A STEEL TRAP, THEIR AMMUNITION SPENT.
TWELVE OF OUR MEN KILLED BY YOU MURDERING BRITISH SWINE! THROW DOWN YOUR GUNS ...SCHNELL!
BOUCHER
74
WE'VE NO CHOICE, LADS. ALL THAT JOKER NEEDS IS AN EXCUSE TO LET US HAVE IT.

FAIRFAX GASPED IN AGONY AS THE RIFLE-BUTT THUMPED INTO HIS BACK WITH BRUTAL SICKENING FORCE.
I HAVE NO TIME TO DEAL WITH THIS TRASH. THE GESTAPO WANT THEM FOR INTERROGATION. TAKE THEM TO THEIR H.Q. AT UIDHUIZEN.
GET INSIDE ...PIG!

AS THE VAN SPED ALONG THE ARROW-STRAIGHT ROAD OF THE FLAT DUTCH COUNTRYSIDE...
UIDHUIZEN! THAT'S THIRTY MILES FROM THE GERMAN BORDER! WONDER WHAT JERRY'S GOT LINED UP FOR US.
IT'S THE GESTAPO, SPENCE! INTERROGATION! YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS. WE SUPPLY THE ANSWERS ...OR ELSE!

Chapter 3. Spirit of the Brave

WE'VE GOT TO JOIN UP WITH OUR LADS AT ARNHEM. HOW DO WE GET THERE?
THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE, MEINHEER. ARNHEM IS TWENTY MILES AWAY AND THE BOCHE HAVE THROWN A RING OF PANZERS AROUND IT. BESIDES, YOUR COMRADE... HE IS BADLY HURT!

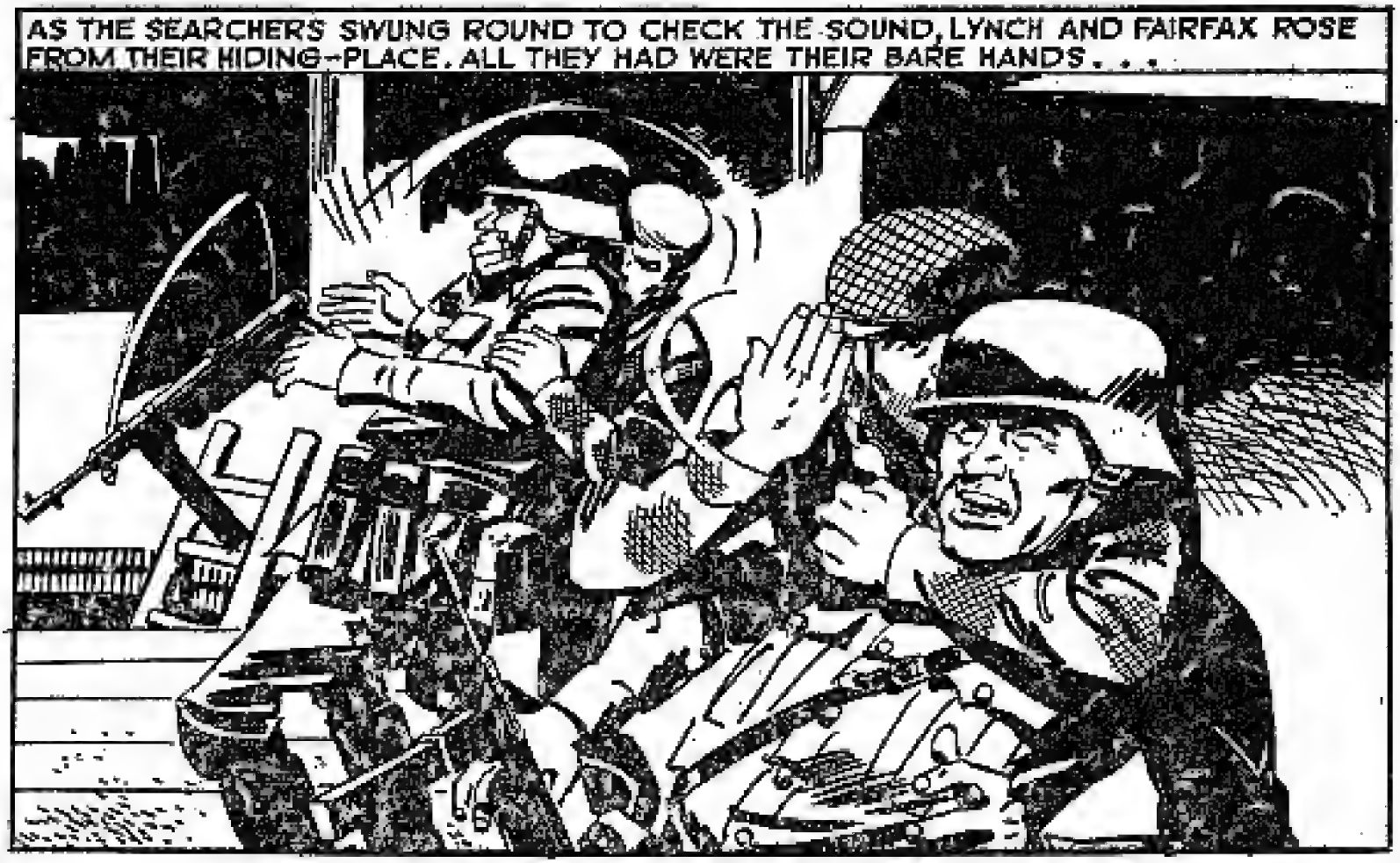
FAIRFAX GROANED INWARDLY. THEY WERE MARKED MEN NOW. IF THEY LEFT GRIFFIN BEHIND, HE WOULD BE EASY PREY FOR THE VENGEFUL GESTAPO.
NOSHER'S HAD IT. HIS LEG'S BROKEN!
LEAVE ME HERE, JOHNNY. I'LL MAKE OUT. YOU LOT GET BACK TO THE FIGHTING.
THAT WOULD NOT BE WISE, TOMMY. WE HAVE JUST KILLED A GESTAPO OFFICER. SOON THEY WILL COME HERE TO SEARCH AND SUCH MEN WILL SHOW NO MERCY!

THEN ONE OF THE RESISTANCE MEN BROKE IN.
WAIT, MEINHEER. MY BROTHER HAS A FARM TEN MILES FROM HERE. YOU CAN HIDE IN HIS BARN TILL YOUR COMRADE'S LEG MENDS. THEN WE WILL SMUGGLE YOU THROUGH THE GERMAN LINES. WE WILL BRING YOU FOOD AT NIGHTS.
THANKS, CHUM. IT'S OUR ONLY CHOICE.

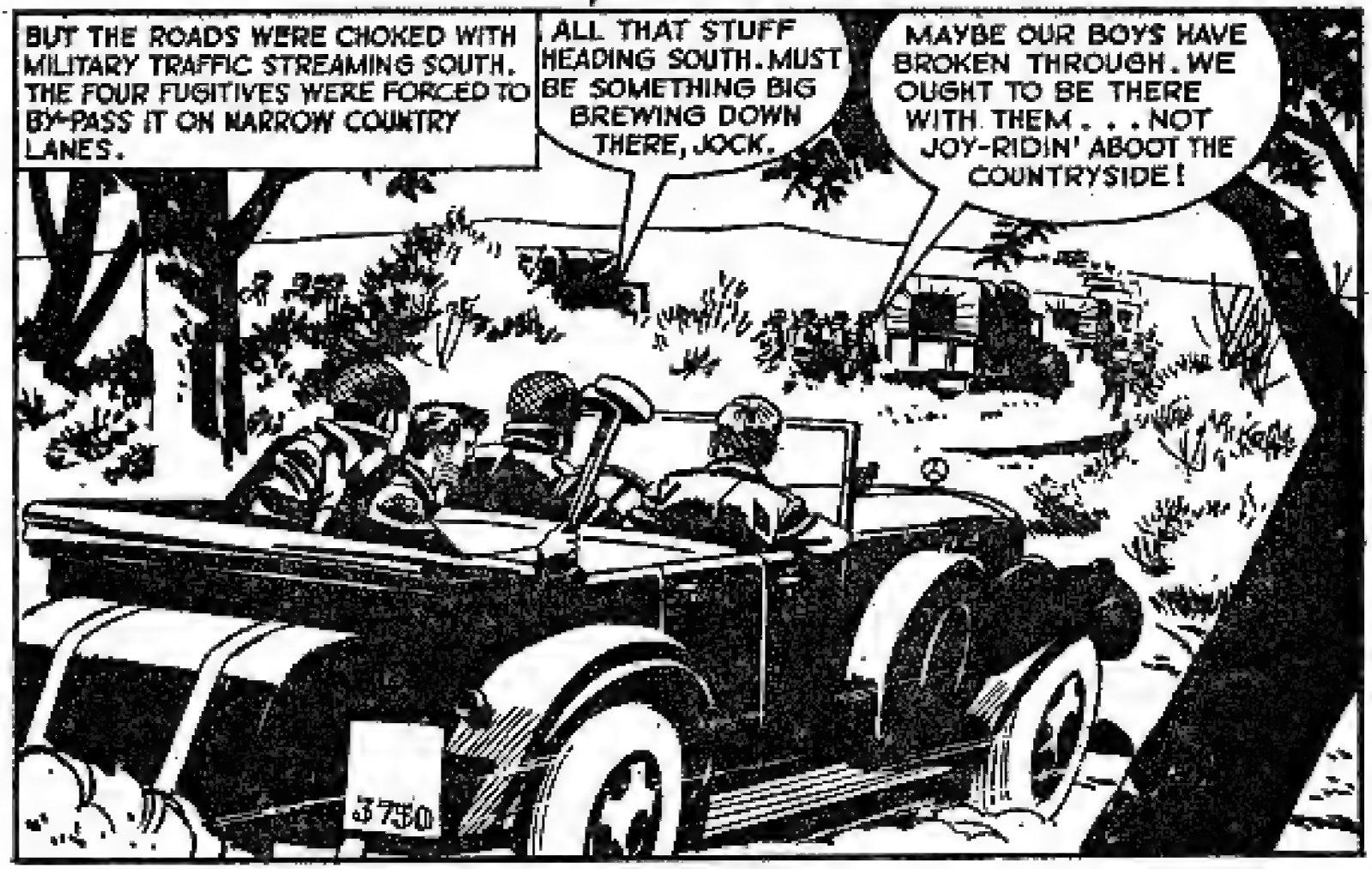
AND SO, FOR TEN LONG WEEKS, THE FOUR PARATROOPERS CHAFED IN IDLENESS, WAITING FOR THE SLOW PROCESS OF TIME TO HEAL GRIFFIN'S BROKEN LEG. AT LAST...
HE WILL BE READY TO MOVE IN A WEEK...BUT HAVE A CARE. THE GESTAPO ARE EXTENDING THEIR SEARCH. LAST WEEK, THEY TOOK AWAY THREE OF MY COUNTRYMEN. THOSE DEVILS NEVER GIVE UP!

EARLY NEXT MORNING, THE SCREECH OF CAR BRAKES ROUSED FAIRFAX FROM SLEEP AND HE MOVED ACROSS TO THE WINDOW. HIS HEART STOOD STILL!
IT'S THE S.S!
THIS IS THE PLACE... JUST AS THAT DUTCH VERMIN DESCRIBED IT BEFORE HE DIED! SEARCH IT FROM TOP TO BOTTOM!

THEY LISTENED TENSELY TO THE CLUMPING OF JACKBOOTS ON THE FLOOR BELOW. THERE WAS A PAUSE, AND THEN...
UP THERE... IN THE LOFT. SCHLIFFEN ...MAYER... SEARCH IT THOROUGHLY.
THIS IS IT, LADS. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. SPENCE. MAKE A NOISE TO DRAW THEM, AND LYNCH AND I WILL JUMP THEM FROM BEHIND.


AS THE SEARCHERS SWUNG ROUND TO CHECK THE SOUND, LYNCH AND FAIRFAX ROSE FROM THEIR HIDING-PLACE. ALL THEY HAD WERE THEIR BARE HANDS...

THEN FAIRFAX AND LYNCH MOVED TO THE HATCH, CAPTURED SCHMEISSER'S FLAMING.
SCHLIFFEN, WHERE...? ACHTUNG! THE BRITISH... ARRRGH!
WE'LL HIDE THESE BODIES UNDER THE HAY, THEN TAKE THEIR CAR. THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT, NOSHER?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, TOSH. I'VE HAD A BASINFUL OF DOIN' NOTHING!


BUT THE ROADS WERE CHOKED WITH MILITARY TRAFFIC STREAMING SOUTH. THE FOUR FUGITIVES WERE FORCED TO BY-PASS IT ON NARROW COUNTRY LANES.
ALL THAT STUFF HEADING SOUTH. MUST BE SOMETHING BIG BREWING DOWN THERE, JOCK.
MAYBE OUR BOYS HAVE BROKEN THROUGH. WE OUGHT TO BE THERE WITH THEM . . . NOT JOY-RIDIN' ABOOT THE COUNTRYSIDE!
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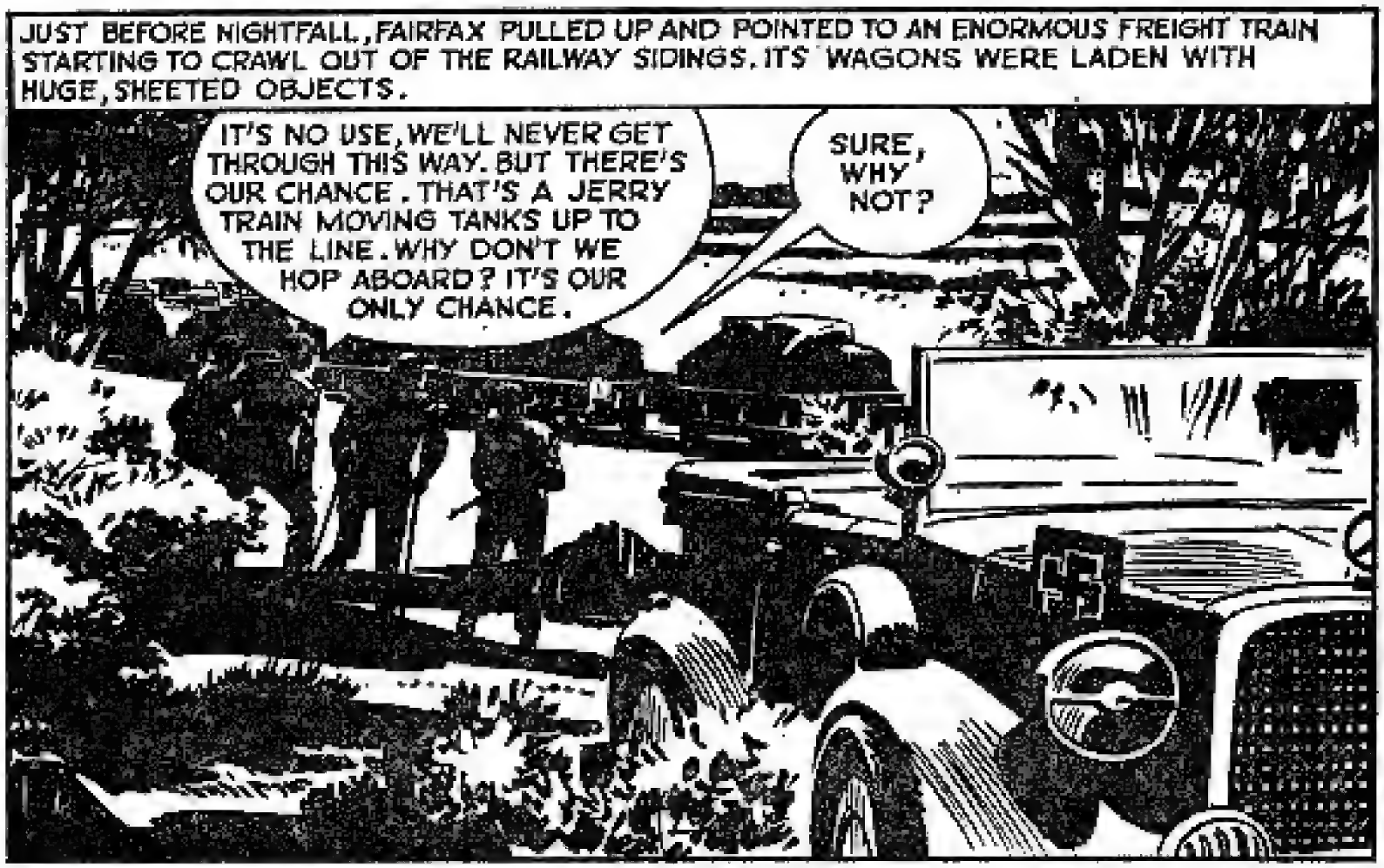
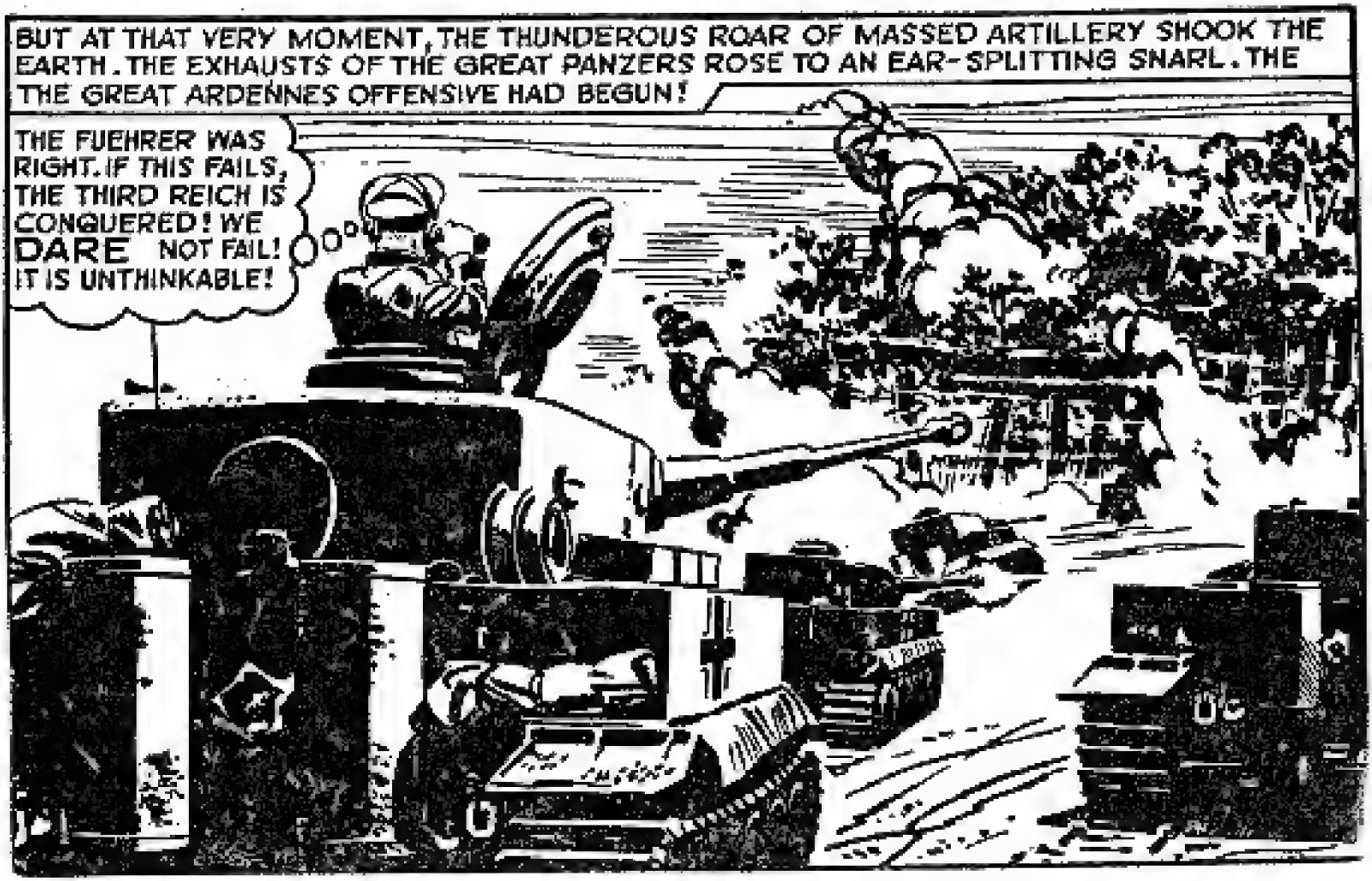

JUST BEFORE NIGHTFALL, FAIRFAX PULLED UP AND POINTED TO AN ENORMOUS FREIGHT TRAIN STARTING TO CRAWL OUT OF THE RAILWAY SIDINGS. ITS WAGONS WERE LADEN WITH HUGE, SHEETED OBJECTS.
IT'S NO USE, WE'LL NEVER GET THROUGH THIS WAY. BUT THERE'S OUR CHANCE. THAT'S A JERRY TRAIN MOVING TANKS UP TO THE LINE. WHY DON'T WE HOP ABOARD? IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE.
SURE, WHY NOT?

THEIR AUDACITY PAID OFF. THEY CLIMBED ABOARD UNSEEN AND THE VAST TRAIN MOVED OUT INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE WINTER COUNTRYSIDE. AS DAWN BROKE NEXT MORNING...
LOOK AT THOSE PANZERS, LADS. THEY'RE TIGERS AND THE ROAD'S COVERED IN STRAW. WHAT'S GOING ON?
LOOKS LIKE JERRY'S PLANNING SOMETHING REALLY BIG... AND KEEPING IT SECRET! AND WE'RE IN ON IT!

FAIRFAX WAS RIGHT. THEY HAD STUMBLED ON TO HITLER'S LAST DESPAIRING BID TO AVERT DEFEAT. THEY WERE WITNESSING THE OPENING PHASES OF THE GREAT ARDENNES OFFENSIVE. THE LAST THROW OF A CRAZY GAMBLER!
WE HAVE CHOSEN WELL. THE FOG OUR WEATHER MEN PROMISED IS STARTING TO COME DOWN. THAT WILL GROUND THEIR PLANES. AT TEN HUNDRED HOURS WE BREAK THROUGH THE LOSHER GAP AND OVERRUN THE AMERICAN POSITIONS. HEIL HITLER!
HEIL HITLER!

PRESENTLY, AS THE TRAIN SLOWED DOWN, THE FOUR FUGITIVES SCRAMBLED CLEAR, AIDED BY THE SWIRLING FOG.
WHICH WAY DO WE GO, NOW?
KEEP STRIKING WESTWARDS. OUR LADS CAN'T BE FAR AWAY. AT LEAST THIS FOG IS ON OUR SIDE.


BUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE THUNDEROUS ROAR OF MASSED ARTILLERY SHOOK THE EARTH. THE EXHAUSTS OF THE GREAT PANZERS ROSE TO AN EAR-SPLITTING SNARL. THE THE GREAT ARDENNES OFFENSIVE HAD BEGUN!
THE FUEHRER WAS RIGHT. IF THIS FAILS, THE THIRD REICH IS CONQUERED! WE DARE NOT FAIL! IT IS UNTHINKABLE!

THE FEROCITY OF THE GERMAN SURPRISE ATTACK CAUGHT THE AMERICAN DEFENCES COMPLETELY OFF THEIR GUARD. IT WAS A 'CRASH BREAKTHROUGH!
HEY, TAKE A LOOK! JUMPING JIMINY, IT'S KRAUT TANKS. THEY'RE GUNNING FOR US . . . AAGH!
1

BLUNDERING THROUGH THE BATTLE-AREA IN THE THICKENING FOG, FAIRFAX STOPPED HIS MEN ABRUPTLY.
WAIT! DO YOU HEAR VOICES?
YOU BET! IT'S A BUNCH OF YANKS! WE'RE OKAY, JOHNNY.
HI, BUD.

AS THE OTHERS TURNED IN RELIEF, FAIRFAX HESITATED . . . WARNED BY SOME INWARD INSTINCT OF DANGER.
HEY, WHADDYA KNOW! A BUNCH OF LIMEYS! GLAD TO MEET YA, BUDDIES. HOW DID YOU GET. . .
HI, YANKS. FIRST TIME I EVER SAW A BUNCH OF G.I.'S THAT WASN'T CHEWING GUM.

UNWITTINGLY, GRIFFIN CONFIRMED JOHNNY FAIRFAX'S SUSPICIONS. . .
NOSHER! SPENCE! LOOK OUT. . . THEY'RE NOT YANKS! THEY'RE JERRY FAKES! THEY'RE GOING TO FIRE!
THE DIRTY TWISTERS!

THE WARNING CAME TOO LATE FOR GRIFFIN AND SPENCE... BUT FAIRFAX AND THE LITTLE SCOT CUT LOOSE WITH THEIR SCHMEISSERS, THEIR FACES FROZEN MASKS OF ANGER.
KAMERAD! WE ONLY OBEYED ORDERS! IT WAS FOR THE FATHERLAND...
WHAT DO YOU RATS EXPECT? MERCY?

LYNCH WAS ALMOST WEEPING WITH ANGER AND GRIEF AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, FAIRFAX REALISED THE FIERCE LOYALTY THAT LAY BENEATH THE FIERY LITTLE CLYDESIDER'S TOUGH EXTERIOR.
I THOUGHT YE WERE ALWAYS THE WIDE ONE, NOSHER! NOBODY EVER PULLED A FAST ONE ON YE! NOW LOOK AT YE... YE BIG, STUPID COCKNEY!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, JOCK.

BUT LYNCH'S FIGHTING INSTINCTS HAD BEEN AROUSED. HE GATHERED UP AN AMMUNITION BELT FROM ONE OF THE GERMAN BODIES AND STARTED TO MOVE OFF.
PLEASE YERSELF WHAT YE DO, JOHNNY. I'M GONNA LOOK FOR MORE O' THESE JERRY DOUBLE-CROSSERS! AND WHEN I FIND 'EM . . . !
COME BACK, HUGHIE! THAT'S NO WAY TO SETTLE IT!
NO? THEN TRY TO STOP ME, YE BIG ENGLISH GOWK!
OKAY, JOCK . . . IF IT'S GOT TO BE THAT WAY!

FAIRFAX'S FIST CLIPPED LYNCH ACROSS THE JAW . . . A SHORT, POWER-PACKED PUNCH WITH THIRTEEN STONE OF MUSCLE BEHIND IT. LYNCH SLUMPED TO THE GROUND.
YOU ASKED FOR IT, HUGHIE. THE WAY YOU FEEL, YOU'D TRY TO SHOOT IT OUT WITH A JERRY PANZER! SOMEBODY HAD TO SNAP YOU OUT OF IT!

PRESENTLY LYNCH CAME ROUND: HE GLARED UP TRUCULENTLY AT FAIRFAX . . . THEN HIS RUGGED FACE BROKE INTO A GRIN.
MON, YE CARRY A WICKED WALLOP FOR A SASSENACH! GUESS I LOST MY HEAD AWHILE BACK. THANKS FOR THE REMINDER. . . BUT YE'VE GOT A FIGHT ON YOUR HANDS WHEN WE COME OUT OF THIS!
ANYTHING YOU SAY, JOCK. NOW LET'S GET TO HECK OUT OF HERE!

NIGHTFALL FOUND THEM WANDERING HOPELESSLY IN THE FREEZING FOG, WITH THE DISTANT ROAR OF GUNS POUNDING THE AIR. JUST AFTER DAWN NEXT DAY, THE FOG LIFTED MOMENTARILY. . .
TAKE A LOOK, JOCK. THREE SHERMANS SLUGGING IT OUT WITH TIGERS. AT LEAST WE KNOW WHERE WE ARE NOW.
LOOKS LIKE THE YANKS ARE PLANNING TO BLOW UP THE BRIDGE.

THEY PASSED THE WRECKAGE OF TWO BURNED-OUT GERMAN TANKS AND REACHED THE SPOT WHERE THE OUTNUMBERED, OUT-GUNNED SHERMANS HAD FOUGHT IT OUT TO THE DEATH.
HOLD IT, YOU TWO! DON'T MOVE... OR I FIRE!
OKAY, PAL, WE'RE ENGLISH. ALL WE WANT TO DO IS TO GET BACK TO OUR OWN MOB.

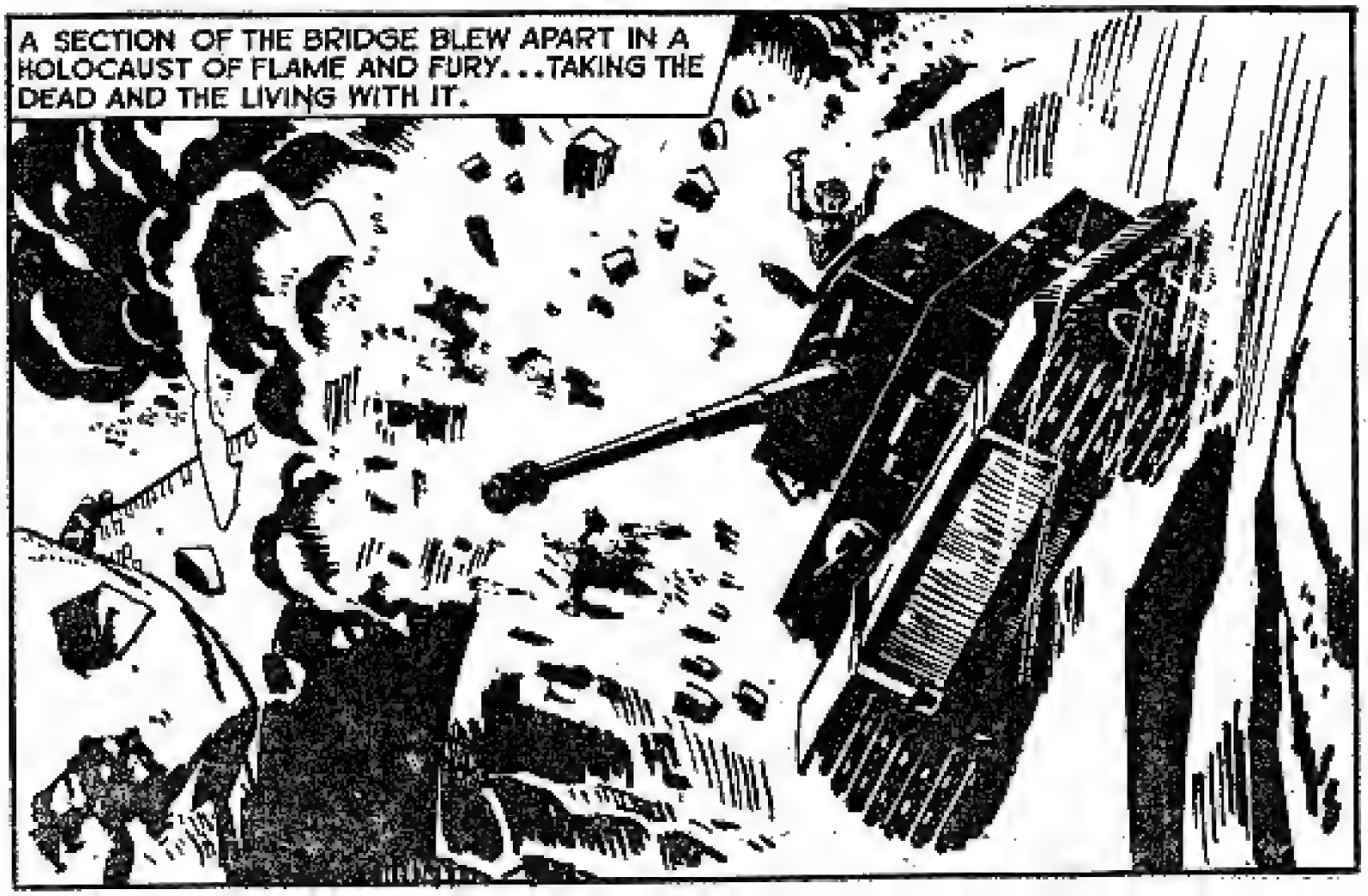
THE FOG WAS CLOSING IN AGAIN, GRIPPING THE LAND IN ITS DAMP, FREEZING FINGERS.
YOU'RE JUST IN TIME. OUR DEMOLITION BOYS ARE WORKING ON THE BRIDGE. IF THE KRAUTS GOT THROUGH WITH THOSE BIG TIGER BABIES . . . THERE'S NOTHING TO STOP THEM ON THE OTHER SIDE.

EVEN AS THE SENTRY SPOKE, FAIRFAX HEARD THE SULLEN RUMBLE OF A GERMAN PANZER APPROACHING. IT MATERIALISED OUT OF THE SWIRLING FOG AND ITS 88 MM. GUN CRACKED OUT . . .
THEY'VE GOT THE DEMOLITION CREW!
NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT! THEY'RE RIGHT ON TOP OF US! THEY'LL BLAST US FROM HERE TO BREAKFAST.

AND THEN FAIRFAX TURNED TO SEE LYNCH RUNNING BACK ALONG THE BRIDGE.
JOCK! GET BACK! THEY'LL RUN YOU DOWN!
SO LONG, JOHNNY. THIS IS FOR NOSHER AN' SPENCE!

A SHELL EXPLODED ON THE BRIDGE PARAPET IN A SHOWER OF STONE SPLINTERS AND FLYING STEEL. LYNCH SWAYED, STAGGERED, THEN GATHERED HIS STRENGTH AND HURLED HIMSELF AT THE DETONATOR BOX.
LOOK AT THAT CRAZY LITTLE GUY! HE'S GONNA MAKE IT! HE'S GONNA MAKE IT!
HE'LL MAKE IT! WHEN LYNCH STARTS A JOB, HE FINISHES IT!

HIS LIPS CURLED BACK IN A DEFIANT GRIN, WITH THE LAST REMNANTS OF HIS EBBING STRENGTH, HUGHIE LYNCH RAMMED THE PLUNGER HOME!
YE HEAR ME, JOHNNY? SCOTLAND FOREVER!


A SECTION OF THE BRIDGE BLEW APART IN A HOLOCAUST OF FLAME AND FURY...TAKING THE DEAD AND THE LIVING WITH IT.

IN THE SILENCE, FAIRFAX AND THE AMERICAN SOLDIER STARED DOWN AT THE RIVER BELOW.
WHAT A GUY! WAS HE YOUR BUDDY?
I'D LIKE TO THINK HE WAS, YANK. YET NOBODY EVER GOT NEAR ENOUGH TO HUGHIE TO BE QUITE SURE.

HIS THOUGHTS DRIFTED BACK OVER THE PAST, SAVOURING THE MEMORY OF TWO REBELS WHO HAD PAID THEIR RECKONING AND PASSED ON.
COME OFF IT, YOU BOW-LEGGED, CHOPPED-OFF, GINGER-HAIRED LITTLE TYKE! EVERY TIME YOU HIT A BLOKE, YOU LAND US IN THIS JOB!
WHY, YE GUTTER-BRED COCKNEY SPIV! IF I'D HAD A REAL FIGHTER BESIDE ME, WE'D HAVE CLEANED OUT THE PLACE!

Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Second class postage paid at New York Post Office, New York. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch Ltd. South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd. Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingstons Ltd. WAR PICTURE LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unauthorised cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever. 2/3/64

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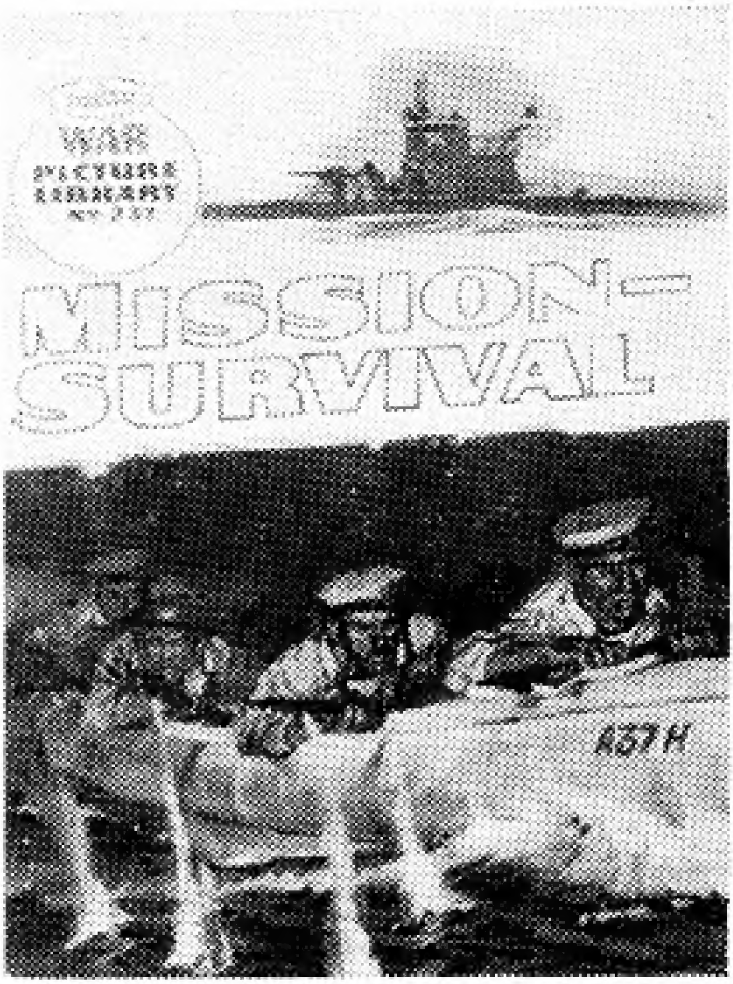

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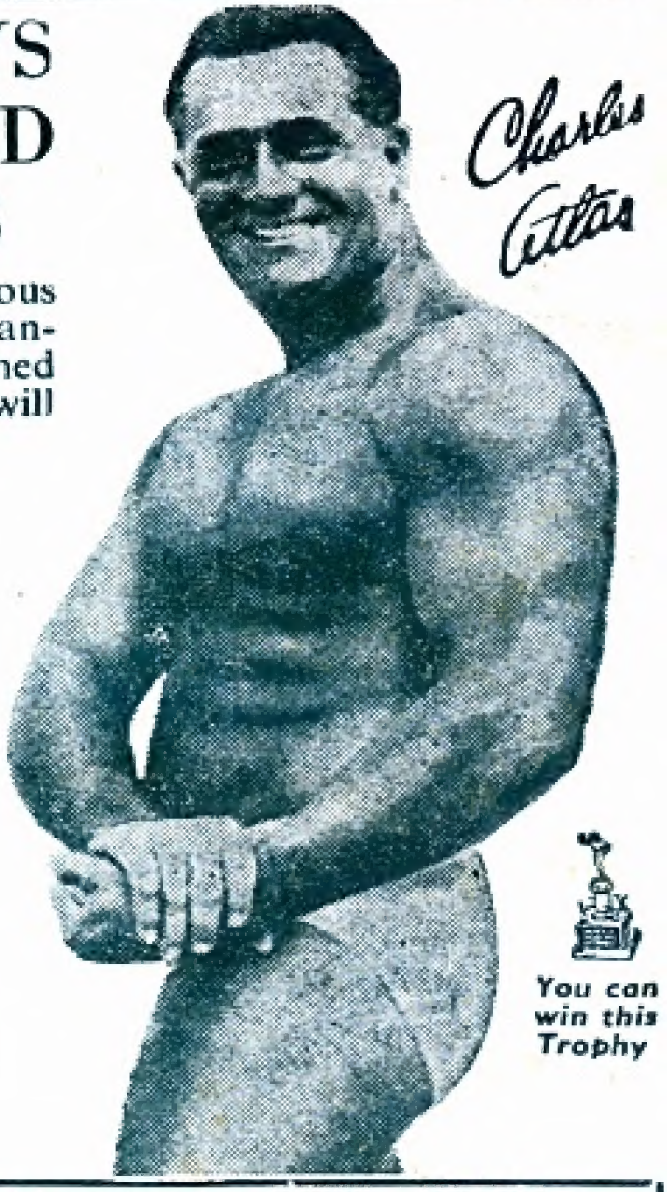

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